

# Enablers and Barriers to Volunteering in Care

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## Background

Findings from the UK Commission into the Future of Hospice Care<sup>1</sup> and from recent literature<sup>2,3</sup> suggest that volunteering will become even more important to hospices and palliative care services in the future if they are to meet the needs of increasing numbers of patients and families. Recommendations included volunteers becoming more fully integrated into the professional team and the further development of roles in care<sup>1,2,3</sup>.

Together for Short Lives and Help the Hospices, national organisations for adult and children's hospice and palliative care services in the UK, undertook a joint project exploring the future development of volunteering across both sectors in order to develop resources to enable and support volunteering in the future.

To ensure that these resources would meet real rather than perceived need, a survey of a range of hospice professionals and including volunteers was undertaken to identify the barriers to the development of volunteering in care.

## Method

A short self-administered online questionnaire was developed and distributed through existing hospice and palliative care networks including chief executives (CEOs), clinical leads and voluntary services managers. Presentations and workshops at conferences were also used as a medium for discussion and data gathering.

Responses were received from CEOs, senior clinical leaders, voluntary services managers, trustees and volunteers from 83 hospices throughout the UK.



## Findings

Of the 83 hospices taking part 97% indicated that volunteers already had significant involvement in care which contrasts with previous research.

Respondents also highlighted a number of factors that contribute to the success of volunteering:

- effective recruitment and selection
- good training, effective inductions
- effective engagement of staff to ensure good understanding of volunteering
- clear volunteer roles, boundaries and expectations
- the commitment and personality of the volunteer
- effective support, supervision and leadership
- integration with the professional team
- clear frameworks and policies
- valuing and empowering volunteers to use their skills

There was also clear commitment to the further development of volunteering in care which support Scott's (2013) research findings.

## Enablers and Barriers

Key factors most frequently identified as barriers to the development of volunteering in care include:

- staff anxiety that greater volunteer involvement would threaten jobs
- lack of time and resource to support volunteers
- capacity to deliver training to volunteers and staff
- finding adequate numbers of appropriately skilled volunteers
- providing effective supervision.

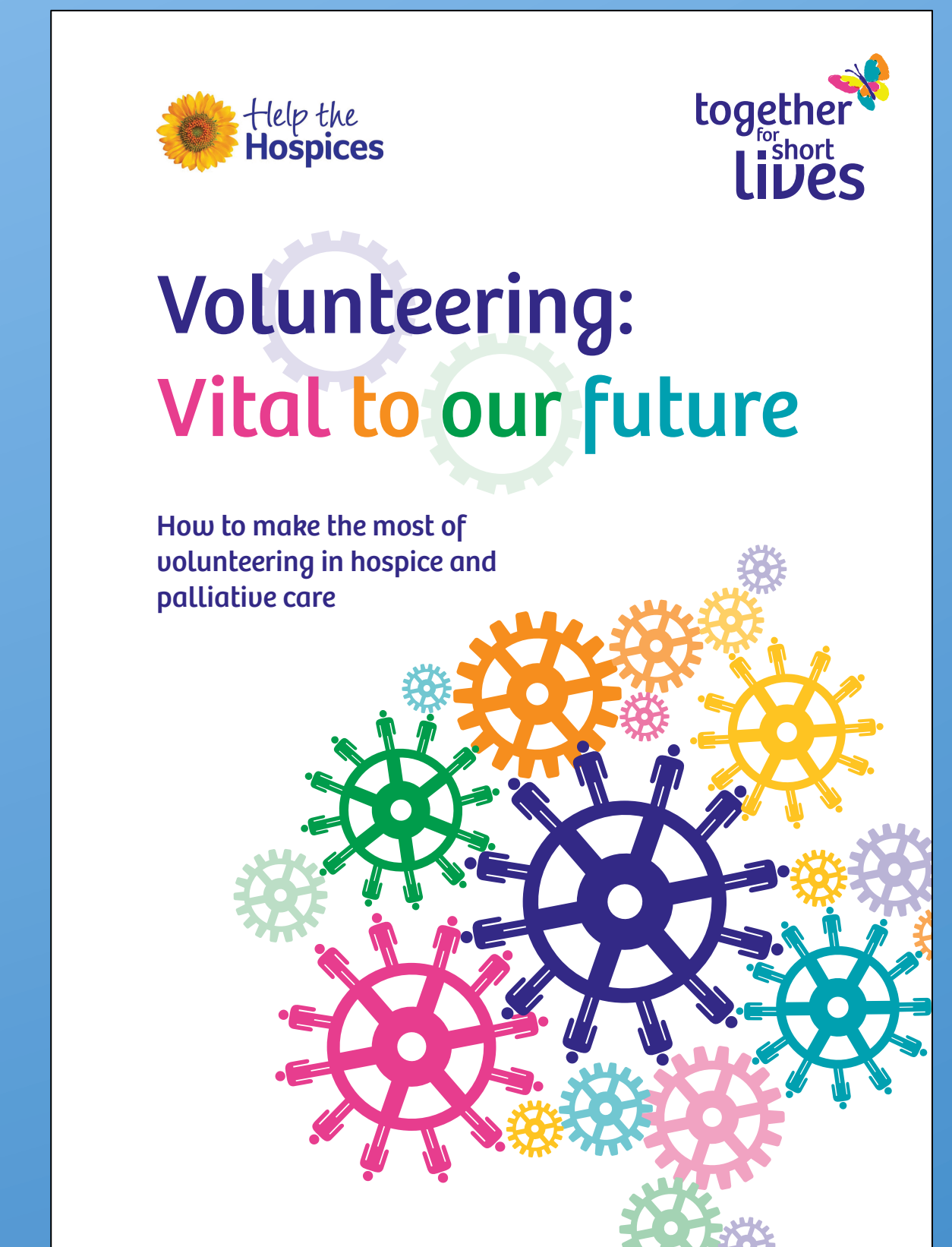
Factors, most frequently identified as enabling the development of volunteering in care include:

- sharing policy, practice, experience and resources
- development of national initiatives
- additional resources
- development of readily available training packages
- commitment from senior management teams and trustees

## Outcomes and Conclusion

A resource "Volunteering: Vital to Our Future"<sup>4</sup> was developed based on the findings. The purpose is to promote effective practice and provide resources to support services in their development of volunteering. Combining guidance, signposting and an Evaluation Toolkit the resource is illustrated by case studies from a range of services in the UK and beyond.

There is clearly a willingness to further develop volunteering. Services are being challenged to review and rethink their approach to volunteering, to change out-dated, approaches and engage collaboratively with patients, families, staff, volunteers and communities in doing so. Volunteering is indeed vital to our future.



## References

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